DRAMA EVOLVES OVER TIME AND ACROSS CULTURES.
Drama all over the world began as religious ritual.
Greek drama, both tragedy and comedy, originated in festivals celebrating Dionysus, god of wine and fertility.
The word "drama" comes from the Greek word "dram," meaning "to do" or "to act."
Lucius Annaeus Seneca was the most important of ROMAN tragedy writers.
The simplest way to distinguish between tragedy and comedy is to say that a tragedy has an unhappy ending and a comedy has a happy one.
Another way to distinguish between tragedy and comedy is to talk about the kinds of CHARACTERS found in tragedy and comedy.
Traditional tragedies trace the fall of someone whose stature is greater than that of an ordinary person.
Comedies often depict ordinary individuals or stock characters.
During the Middle Ages, drama was, for a while, confined to strolling minstrels and players.
From the Church grew another form of drama. Bible stories were acted out, first by priests before the altar and later by actors on the steps of the cathedral.
Biblical plays gave way to what were called “morality plays.” These plays were enacted to teach certain morals or lessons.
As Greek and Roman manuscripts began to be rediscovered, the classical dramas were copied and restaged.
By the end of the 16th century, the folk, religious, and classical elements of the theater had culminated in the dramas of William Shakespeare.
Certain forms of drama have become associated with particular countries...
The English have often used the stage to laugh at themselves and to criticize their own society.
The French have produced plays that are, for the most part, cool, objective, and ironic – a theater of the mind...
Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus are two of the pivotal modern French playwrights.
Toward the end of the 19th century, the Scandinavians produced a series of “social” dramas.
They were angry, hardheaded attacks on middle-class society.
Americans became famous for the development of musical comedies and movies, which made Broadway and Hollywood household terms.
TRAGEDY AND COMEDY
Over the centuries, plays have generally clustered around 2 poles: *tragedy* and *comedy*. These terms were first established by the Greeks.
“Tragos” in Greek means “goat,” and “oide” means “song,” thus, “goatsong.” This was a primitive play in which an actor, dressed in goatskin, sang his lines.
As Greek drama developed, the word “tragedy” came to be applied to serious plays.
These plays depicted the fall and death of a noble character who is in conflict with forces beyond his/her control.
Tragedy requires that the hero-heroine make choices that lead to a situation from which there is no escape.
Tragedy is the confrontation of human intelligence with forces that intelligence cannot cope with.
The hero/heroine often brings about his/her own downfall through the tragic flaw of hubris, excessive pride or arrogance.
Aristotle wrote that tragedy should provide a catharsis, a release of emotions, for the viewer.
“Komos” in Greek means “festival,” and “oide” means “song,” thus “comedy.”
Most likely, this song was sung by a daring peasant who, with temporary immunity, poked fun at the king and nobility, in order to let them know some of their faults.
Comedy eventually developed into a special form of theater in which a comic hero acted out a story that mocked social customs and procedures.
Aristophanes

The greatest writer of Greek comedies
The best comedy of all ages seems to have continued in this tradition...
Comedy usually...

- takes aim at society.
- advocates change.
- makes us laugh.
Both tragic and comic figures struggle against authority of some sort, BUT
In tragedy, the odds are usually unconquerable;
In comedy, the hero/heroine is usually able to overthrow the authority figure and the play ends happily.
Characters in Greek comedy are ordinary people in ordinary situations.
Tragedies sometimes do contain humor.
Uses of Humor Inside Tragedy

- To produce round characters
- To make particular points
- To relieve the seriousness of a specific scene
CONVENTIONS (Practices) OF DRAMA
Greek Conventions

- Chorus
- Choragos
- Odes
Elizabethan Conventions

- Asides
- Soliloquies
Screenplay
(drama written for a movie)

- Voice-over
- Dissolve
Teleplay
(drama written for T.V.)

• Limit to length of program

• Limit to size of screen

• Close-ups are important
The most important device for presenting character and for moving the action of the story along
FARCE

Kind of comedy that makes use of
• exaggerated characters,
• absurd situations, and
• considerable physical action.
In farce,

- the **situation** is always more significant than the characters; and
- the **action** is more important than the dialogue.
GREEK THEATER

The theater in which Greek drama was performed resembled a stadium and was called an amphitheater.
The area at the base of the platform was called the orchestra. This was where the chorus changed and danced and where the actors performed. (The raised stage did not appear until Roman times.)
The structure of the amphitheater was such that someone standing in the orchestra and speaking in a normal voice could be heard clearly anywhere in the amphitheater.
Originally, dance was more important than acting.
Skene

A painted wall behind the orchestra, through which actors exited and entered.

Our word for “scenery” comes from this word.
All of the actors were men. They were masked and padded and moved in a stately, controlled fashion.
Aeschylus is credited with developing the drama masks that are so familiar to us today.
The chorus was made up of 15 men, with one spokesman (or leader), called the choragos.
FUNCTIONS OF THE CHORUS

• Represent the city elders
• Take part in the action of the play
• React to what was happening as citizens might...
• Comment on the action of the play
• Interpret the play’s meaning for the audience
Ancient Greeks used color and length of toga to denote social status.
SHAKESPEAREAN THEATER

• April, 1564: William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon.
• He died at the age of 52.
Shakespeare has been regarded as the single greatest writer in the English language.
No single writer has contributed more words to the English vocabulary than Shakespeare.
The works of Shakespeare and the King James Bible have provided over 80% of our written language.
Shakespeare became a full sharer in the profits of the acting company known as the Lord Chamberlain’s Company.
London theaters were closed from June 1592 to April 1594 because of the plague.
Early in 1599, Chamberlain’s Men moved into a new theater, built to their own specifications...
It was named The Globe.

• One of the first plays performed in this theater was *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. 
When Queen Elizabeth I died, Shakespeare’s company received the enthusiastic patronage of her successor, James I, and his company became known thereafter as “The King’s Men.”
Shakespeare lived near the end of the historical period known as the Renaissance (1350-1600).
ANACHRONISMS

“Out of time” – out-of-place objects, customs, and beliefs
SHAKESPEAREAN THEATER

- The first Globe Theater was constructed with a thatched roof.
- Fourteen years later, the thatch caught fire when weapons were discharged during a production of *Henry VIII*, and the Globe burned to the ground.
Before theaters, plays were performed in the courtyards of inns and on wagons on the street.
The Globe

The Globe contained many reminders of its court-yard origins:

• It was an 8-sided building with a central yard, about 1/3 of which was occupied by a 6-foot high platform stage.
Those who paid the least to gain admission. They were the noisiest and most vocally critical members of the audience.
The Globe had no artificial lighting. Performances took place in the afternoon.
BLACKFRIAR’S’S

The only candle-lit indoor playhouse.

Shakespeare used it during the winter.
The realistic, boxlike set that we know did not come into being until the late 19th century (1800’s).
REPERTORY SYSTEM

Plays at the Globe were acted on this system in which a different play was presented every afternoon.
The company kept on its program a series of plays to which it was constantly adding. The average life of a play was about 10 performances, although popular plays were generally acted more often.
About 15 men played all the roles in *Julius Caesar*, with the women’s parts taken by boy apprentices.
King James I wrote verse (poetry) and prose (all other writing not poetry). A group of scholars under his patronage prepared “The Authorized Version of the Bible in English,” commonly known as the King James Bible.
Conventions

Silent agreements between the audience and the producer of a work.
Shakespeare and his audience accepted certain conventions. One of these was verse. Shakespeare will have his characters speak in prose, but often for a coarse, comic effect.
A character’s comment that is directed to the audience or another character, but is not heard by any of the other characters.
An aside is like the actor is whispering a secret in the audience’s ear.
SOLILOQUY

A dramatic device in which a character, alone on a stage, (or while under the impression of being alone) reveals his/her own private thoughts and feelings as if thinking aloud.
A soliloquy gives information that the character would not reveal to other characters in the play.
EXAMPLES OF SOLILOQUY

- **Julius Caesar**: Antony vows his revenge of Caesar’s murder (Act III, scene i)

- **Macbeth**: “To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus – Our fears in Banquo stick deep” (Act III, scene i)
AMBIGUITY

a situation in which something can be understood in more than one way and it is not clear which meaning is intended
CHRONOLOGY

the order in which events occur, or their arrangement according to this order
COMEDY OF MANNERS

a comedy that satirizes the manners and customs of a section of society, especially fashionable society
COMIC RELIEF

A humorous scene, event, or speech in a serious drama.
Comic relief usually provides relief from emotional intensity, while at the same time highlighting the seriousness of the story.
DRAMATIC IRONY

Occurs when the audience knows something that the character does not know.
A minor character whose attitudes, beliefs, and behavior differ significantly from those of a main character.
Through contrast, the foil underscores the distinctive characteristics of the main character.
The foil may

- highlight flaws in the main character’s personality.
- suggest what the main character may have been like if these flaws had not been present.
HISTORIES

Plays that deal with historical events, such as Shakespeare’s

*Julius Caesar*

*Macbeth*
INTERNAL CONFLICT

A struggle that takes place within the mind of a character who is torn between opposing feelings or goals
KABUKI

traditional Japanese drama in which male actors play both male and female parts
NOH

a form of Japanese drama that presents a story in a highly stylized fashion, using music, dance, and elaborate costumes.
PARADOX

A statement that appears to be contradictory but is actually true

Example: “I am and not, I freeze and yet am burned.” (“On Monsieur’s Departure”)

Example: “Youth is wasted on the young.” (George Bernard Shaw)
THEME

The main idea of a play
• A **stated theme** is expressed directly and explicitly.
• An **implied theme** is revealed gradually through other elements, such as plot, character, setting, and point of view